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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 ATHENS 000437

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GR](#) [INTERNAL](#)

SUBJECT: NEW GREEK CABINET LINEUP

REF: A. ATHENS 419

[1](#)B. ATHENS 341

Classified By: Ambassador Charles P. Ries. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Greek Government Spokesman Roussopoulos announced the much-anticipated reshuffle of the Greek Cabinet February 14. Ref A reports in depth on new Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyianni. The new Cabinet, which was sworn in at 10am (local) February 15, includes 14 ministers and deputy ministers who are alumni of USG exchange programs.

[1](#)2. (C) Karamanlis' new Cabinet is smaller (six deputy minister positions were axed) but still very familiar to the Embassy. There are only three new faces in the Cabinet, not counting new FM Bakoyianni who has been the frontrunner to replace outgoing FM Molyviatis for months. Vangelis Meimarakis is a bit of a surprise at MOD, perhaps indicating a concern that the important defense portfolio be managed with a more deft political hand. We may need to work to bring Meimarakis up-to-speed on NATO and security issues, but in his previous position (Secretary of the ND Party Central Committee) he has been accessible to us and favorably disposed. The other key change from our standpoint is the replacement of George Voulgarakis by Vyrion Polydoros at the Ministry of Public Order. Voulgarakis in recent months has veered from his previous cooperative, pro-American attitudes, and throughout his MPO term seemed consumed more by the cameras than effectiveness and follow-through. So at first blush, we think Polydoros is likely to be an improvement, although he may face a suspicious welcome from the Ministry staff.

[1](#)3. (C) Overall, Karamanlis has not chosen to bring in new blood, seemingly content to rely on trusted advisors and longstanding party leaders. The Embassy is scheduling calls for Ambassador with the new Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Public Order and Defense as priorities. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

[1](#)4. (C) Cabinet Appointments:

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

(U) BAKOYIANNI, Theodora. Born 1954, the eldest child of former Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis (1990-1993). Family fled Greece to escape the military dictatorship in 1968, returned in 1974. Married politician Pavlos Bakoyiannis in 1974, who was assassinated by domestic terrorist organization "17 November" in 1989. Remarried in 1998 to Greek businessman Isidoros Kouvelos, although he stays out of public life. Studied political science and law at the University of Athens, politics and communications in Germany. Longstanding member of the New Democracy (ND) party. During her father's tenure as PM, served as Minister of Culture. In the opposition, served as shadow foreign/defense minister. Elected to parliament four times. Picked by PM Karamanlis in 2002 to run for Mayor of Athens. Fluent in English, French and German.

(C) COMMENT: Two MFA deputies, Yiannis Valynakis and Evripidis Stylianidis remain in place. The new Deputy FM responsible for diaspora issues is Theodoros Kassimis, who was Deputy Minister for National Economy from 1992-1993. Kassimis is well and favorably known to the Embassy.

MINISTER OF PUBLIC ORDER

(U) POLYDORAS, Vyrion. Born 1947 in Olympia. Studied law at University of Athens and political science at the University of Nevada. Elected MP for Athens B district in 1981 (seven consecutive terms). Member of the Standing Committee on Public Administration, Public Order and Justice, as well as the Committee on Defense and Foreign Affairs. Member of parliamentary assemblies of the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. Deputy Minister for the Presidency and Government Spokesman 1990-1992. Deputy FM for diaspora issues 1992-1993. Member of ND Central Committee, and ND Parliamentary Spokesman since 2004. Published author of several books, including a book on Bushido and a recent book

(in Greek only) on how the Truman Doctrine created the conditions for the modern Greek state. Participated in a Voluntary Visitor program on Greek-American relations in 1994. Received a Fulbright grant in 1982 to attend American Studies seminar in Salzburg. NATO tour in 1990. Speaks fluent English.

(C) COMMENT: Polydoras will bring some color into the Cabinet, and perhaps new effectiveness to MPO. He is a martial arts fanatic, rides a Harley and is famous for being outspoken and unpredictable. Embassy wisdom holds that Polydoras did not get a Cabinet appointment in 2004 when ND swept to power, because in the aftermath of victory, Polydoras said publicly that PM Karamanlis would fire 15,000 state employees (in other words, all members of the opposition PASOK party). His popularity will stand him in good stead at the Public Order Ministry, which needs a strong dose of public approval, and maybe some crockery-breaking. That said, the MPO is laced with PASOK holdovers, many already disgruntled with Polydoras' predecessor Voulgarakis, and prone to leaks.

MINISTER OF DEFENSE

(U) MEIMARAKIS, Vangelis. Born 1953 in Athens. Lawyer. Studied at the University of Athens and Panteion University, specializing in electoral systems and taxation. Member of ND and founding member of ND Youth Organization since 1974. Elected MP for Athens B District in 1989 (reelected four times). Member of Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and Committee on Defense and Foreign Affairs. Deputy Minister for Culture (Sports) 1992-1993. Secretary of ND Central Committee since 2001. Participated in NATO tour in 1988. Speaks good English.

(C) COMMENT: A party apparatchik with no background in the military, Meimarakis has likely been told to manage the politics of the MOD, in contrast to his predecessor, Spiliotopoulos, who was more of a technocrat (with strong ties to the military based on his air force past). Meimarakis is a strong supporter of new FM Bakoyianni (an old nickname of his is "Dorakis"); Embassy predicts there will be much closer coordination between MOD and MFA as a result of the chemistry between these two longtime allies.

MINISTER OF CULTURE

(U) VOULGARAKIS, George. Born 1959 on Crete. Economist. Studied at University of Piraeus, and has a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Athens. MP since 1989 (reelected four times). Member of the Parliament Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense and a member of the Greek Parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. Deputy Minister for the Environment, Town Planning and Public Works, 1992-93. Member of the Central Council of the National Union of Students (EFEE) (1984-1988). Speaks good English.

(C) COMMENT: Formerly Minister of Public Order. Voulgarakis worked closely with the Embassy in the run-up to and conduct of the Olympic Games in 2004, but since that time has proven to be a less reliable ally. During his tenure as MPO, Voulgarakis was quick to dismiss the threat of international terrorism to Greece, and has not moved decisively to address domestic terrorism threats or crack down on anarchists that could become next-generation terrorists. Most recently, he has allowed rumors to circulate that the U.S. is behind a major eavesdropping case in Greece (Ref B). He remains, however, close to the PM, having supported Karamanlis' leadership from the outset. From Crete, he also has longstanding ties to former PM Mitsotakis and new FM Bakoyianni, although of late he is said to have seen himself as a rival to Bakoyianni and as future Prime Ministerial material. The move to the Culture ministry suggests Voulgarakis retains Karamanlis's trust, if not his confidence that Voulgarakis can lead the MPO.

MINISTER OF TOURISM

(U) PALLI-PETRALIA, Fani. Born 1943 in Athens. Lawyer, studied at University of Athens. First elected MP for Athens B district in 1985. Member of the Parliament Standing Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs. Deputy Minister for Culture (Sports) 1990-1991 and Deputy Minister for Health 1992-1993. Elected to ND Central Committee in 1990. Elected President of the European Union of Women in 1999 and President of the International Democratic Union of Women in 2002. Individual IV program on U.S.-Greece relations and role of American women in high-tech industry in 1987. Speaks fluent English.

(C) COMMENT: Formerly alternate Culture Minister (PM Karamanlis held title of Culture Minister), with primary GoG authority for non-security aspects of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. She is a close contact of the Embassy.

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

(U) AVRAMOPOULOS, Dimitris. Born 1953. Studied Political Science and Public Law at the University of Athens; received two post-graduate degrees on European Studies and International Organization at the Universities of Brussels and Boston. Joined Greek Foreign Service in 1980. He served during his diplomatic career (1980-1993) as Consul in Liege, Special Diplomatic Adviser to the Prime Minister, representative at the Conference of Vienna for Security and Cooperation in Europe, spokesman of the MFA, Director of the PM's Diplomatic Cabinet and Consul General in Geneva. Member of Parliament 1993-1994, Mayor of Athens 1994-2002. President of a small conservative party he established in December 2000 in an attempt to try to leverage between the two major parties. Dissolved his party in 2002. Speaks French, English and Italian.

(C) COMMENT: Formerly Minister of Tourism. The Ministry of Health faces enormous financial shortfalls, an issue that will have to be dealt with immediately. Former Health Minister Kaklamanis, a medical doctor now running for Mayor of Athens in 2006, was seen as a knowledgeable and effective administrator. It's not clear that Avramopoulos has the background or the administrative skill to deal with this key ministry, including the issue of avian flu.

MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

(U) TSITOURIDIS, Savvas. Born 1954. Studied law in Thessaloniki; postgraduate studies in International Relations and Political Science in France, and International Economics in Britain. MP since 1996, member of Standing Committees on Economic Affairs and European Affairs. Alternate ND parliamentary spokesman on matters relating to Development, Agriculture and European Affairs since 1997. Member of the Greek parliamentary delegation to the International Parliamentary Union (1997-2000). Member of the all-party parliamentary committee on agricultural policy. ND shadow minister for the Environment, Town Planning and Public Works since June 2000. Member of the ND Central Committee since April 1994. Speaks French, English and Italian.

(C) COMMENT: Tsitouridis was Agriculture Minister until a trivial "scandal" involving use of ministerial influence to secure his son's transfer to a university in Athens forced his resignation from the Cabinet. He is considered capable and pro-American by Embassy Ag staff. At the time he was sacked, he was trying to help out on the issue of GMOs. We think the PM brought him back because he is intelligent, and has proven able to handle complex subjects.

MINISTER OF MACEDONIA AND THRACE

(U) KALANTZIS, Yiorgos. Born 1954 in Kavala. Pharmacist by profession, studied at the University of Athens. Elected MP for Kavala since 1993. Alternate Secretary General of the ND Parliamentary Group. Member of the Committee on Parliamentary Finances, Vice Chair of the Standing Committee on Greeks Abroad. Member of the Parliamentary Assembly for Economic Cooperation of the Black Sea Countries. Founding member of the ND Student movement in 1974. Speaks English.

MINISTER OF STATE AND PRESS SPOKESMAN

(U) (no change) ROUSSOPOULOS, Theodoros. Born 1963. Studied journalism in Athens and worked as journalist 1981-2000. Worked as political editor for Eleftherotypia, and Sunday Eleftherotypia 1984-2000, for Mega TV Channel 1989-1999, Nea Messimvrini 1994, Sunday Kathimerini 1995, and as political commentator for Star TV channel 1999-2000. Spokesman of New Democracy party since August 2000. Speaks English.

MINISTER OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AND FINANCE

(U) (no change) ALOGOSKOUFIS, George. Born 1955. Economist, Professor at the Economic University of Athens. Studied at University of Athens; MSc (1978) and Ph.D. (1982), London School of Economics. Economic Advisor to former PM Mitsotakis. Parliamentary activities: Elected MP of State in the general elections of 1996 and re-elected MP for Athens A in the 2000 general elections. Member of the Standing

Committee on Economic Affairs. Speaks fluent English and French, participated in IV Program in 1993.

(C) COMMENT: Popular ND politician who is close to the PM. Has built a strong record as Economy Minister. Excellent Embassy contact.

MINISTER OF JUSTICE

(U) (no change) PAPALIGOURAS, Anastasis. Born 1948. Lawyer by profession. Studied law, University of Athens; Masters in Comparative European Law, Brunel University, London. MP since 1981. Member of the Parliament Standing Committee on Social Affairs. Leader of the ND Youth organisation (ONNED) 1976-77. Member of the Executive Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the International Democratic Union; the Inter-governmental Committee of the European Democratic Union; the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. Currently member of the Enlargement Committee of the European Popular Party. Speaks English and French.

(C) COMMENT: Interaction with Justice Ministry remains somewhat problematic. Papaligouras dragged his feet on signing protocols to the U.S.-EU extradition treaty and MLAT. MOJ has also been difficult to work with on judicial treatment of trafficking in persons cases. Yet Papaligouras handled the cellphone bugging case with much more responsibility and restraint than MPO Voulgarakis. Papaligouras' biggest challenge will be successful prosecution of the many judges implicated in the judiciary corruption scandals, and the rebuilding of the judiciary afterwards.

MINISTER OF MERCHANT MARINE

(U) (no change) KEFALOYIANNIS, Emmanouel. Born 1959. Economist by profession. Studied Economics and Politics, University of Athens; MA in European Studies, University of Reading, UK; M.Sc. in European History and Politics, London School of Economics. MP since 1990. Vice-Chairman of the Parliament Standing Committee on European Affairs. Member of the Parliament Standing Committees on Educational Affairs and on Institutions and Transparency. Head of the ND Culture and the Olympics Committee. Hails from a famous Crete family; both his late father and uncle were former ND ministers. Speaks English, participated in IV Program in 1996.

(C) COMMENT: Tenure as minister thus far seen as generally successful. We have good cooperation with him and his ministry.

MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

(U) (no change) LIAPIS, Michalis. Lawyer by profession. Studied law and politics. MP since 1989. Member of the Parliament Standing Committee on Defense and Foreign Affairs. Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Western European Union (Political Committee and Regulation Committee) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Economics and Emigration Committees). Deputy Minister for Commerce 1992-93. Speaks English and French.

(C) COMMENT: Cousin of the Prime Minister and veteran of the inner circle. Long-time Embassy contact.

MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

(U) (no change) YIANNAKOU, Marietta. Born 1951. Studied: Medicine, University of Athens. Specialty: psychiatry. Member of European Parliament 1984-2000, MP for Athens since 1993. Member of the Parliament Standing Committees on National Defense and Foreign Affairs, on Social Affairs, and on European Affairs, and of the Parliamentary Committee on Narcotics. Chairperson of the Committee on narcotics abuse in EU member states; vice-chairperson of the Committee on Women's Rights; and a member of various other committees in the European Parliament. Minister for Health, Welfare and Social Security 1990-91. Member of the European Women's Union (1989-1995). National Coordinator for narcotics. ND Secretary for International Relations (1992-1996 and

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1997-1999). Member of the ND Central Committee since 1997, and the party's Executive Committee since 1998. Member of the ND Council of Section Heads, responsible for employment and social insurance. ND party officer responsible for European, allied, and international matters, as well as the Public Enterprise of Moveable Assets, the Public Debt (ODDHX),

TAXIS, KEPYO and the taxation system. Board member of several international political organizations, including the European Democratic Union, the European People's Party, the International Democratic Union, the European Union of Christian Democrats, and Christian Democrats International. Founding member of the Union of Women Academics and Scientists. Speaks English and French, participated in Voluntary Visitor Program in 1999.

(C) COMMENT: Long-time and close Embassy contact with progressive social views. Important advocate for constitutional change to allow recognition of degrees from U.S. universities in Greece. Successfully promoted Greece's membership on International Task Force on Holocaust Education.

MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT

(U) (no change) SIOUFAS, Dimitris. Born 1944. Lawyer. Studied Political Science and Public Administration, Panteion University, Athens; Law, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. MP since 1981. ND Parliamentary Spokesman (1990-91, 1993-96 and 1997-2000). Member of the Parliamentary Committee on Public Enterprises, Banks and Public Utilities. Elected Secretary General of the ND Parliamentary Group in 2000. Deputy Minister for Health, Welfare and Social Security 1991-92; Minister for Health, Welfare and Social Security 1992-93. Member of the ND Central Committee (1979-1985, 1994-97 and 1997 to date). Member of the ND Executive Committee since 1997. Director General of the National Organisation for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Handicrafts (1977-1981). Alternate vice-Chairman of the Deposits and Loan Fund (1980-1981). Speaks English, participated in IV Program in 1986.

(C) COMMENT: Strong supporter of Karamanlis and senior member of the PM's inner cabinet in political planning since 2001.

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, TOWN PLANNING, PUBLIC WORKS

(U) (no change) SOUFLIAS, George. Born 1941. Civil Engineer by profession. MP 1974-90. Candidate for ND party leadership in 1996 (lost election to Miltiades Evert). Candidate for ND party leadership in 1997 (lost to Costas Karamanlis). Expelled from the party 1998-2001. Returned to ND in 2001 on invitation of Costas Karamanlis. Deputy Minister of Interior 1977-80, Deputy Minister for National Economy 1980-81, Minister for National Economy 1989-90, Deputy Minister for Finance 1989-90, Minister for Tourism 1990, Minister for Education 1991-1993. No English ability.

(C) COMMENT: Held National Economy and Education portfolios during Mitsotakis Administration (1990-1993). Expelled from ND by PM Karamanlis in 1997 for his ties to PASOK leader Simitis (then PM); reinstated in 2000. Has worked cooperatively with Embassy on Annex construction project.

MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

(U) (no change) PAVLOPOULOS, Prokopis. Born 1950. University Law Professor and lawyer by profession. Studied law, University of Athens; Ph.D., University of Paris. MP of State (ND) 1996-2000 and MP in the 2000 general election. ND Parliamentary Spokesman since 2000. Member of the Parliament Standing Committees on Public Administration, Public Order and Justice, the Special Standing Committee on Institutions and Transparency, the Committee for the Revision of the Constitution, and the Committee on Public Enterprises, Banks and Public Utilities. Alternate Minister for the Presidency and government spokesman in the Zolotas all-party government, 1989. Secretary to Michail Stasinopoulos, then President of the Republic, 1974. Legal adviser to Konstantinos Karamanlis, then President of the Republic (1990-95) and in September 1995 he took over as Political adviser to Miltiadis Evert, then ND Party Chairman. Former Board member of the Greek Culture Foundation, and vice-Chairman of the board of ERT S.A. (the Greek State Radio and Television company). Appointed ND Press and Information spokesman by Mr. Evert in 1996. ND party officer responsible for legal aid issues. Speaks some English, but fluent French and German.

(C) COMMENT: ND party stalwart and the ranking member of the Cabinet. Very close to PM Karamanlis. He has only had modest success in his efforts to modernize the Greek bureaucracy. He is consumed currently with thorny issues of immigration reform.

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOODS

(U) (no change) BASIAKOS, Evangelos. Born 1954. Studied law and political science, University of Athens, specialized in EC law. Postgraduate studies at the Academy of International Law in The Hague, at the Institute for Human Rights in Strasbourg, Harvard University and the University of the Pacific. Elected MP for Viotia in 1989. Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1990-1991) and OSCE since 1996. Deputy Ag Minister 1992-1993. Agriculture Minister since 2004. Speaks only limited English.

MINISTER OF AEGEAN AND ISLAND POLICY

(U) (no change) PAVLIDES, Aristotelis. Born 1943 on the island of Kos. Studied Mathematics and Business Administration at the University of Athens. ND Deputy shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, member of the Parliament Committee for Foreign and Defense Affairs. Former Minister of Merchant Marine, and Finance. Board Member of the Western European Union, and of the Parliament Committee of the Council of Europe. Member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Participated in IV Program in 1979. Speaks English.
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